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LARRY CRAIG

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NEWS RELEASE

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CRAIG-COSPONSORED BILLS APPROVED
BY SENATE ENERGY & NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
-- Legislation Also Okayed to Carry Firearms in National Parks --

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Three bills critical to Idaho interests and cosponsored by Idaho Senator Larry Craig were reported out of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee today and now will go to the full Senate for action.

The Committee also approved legislation to give gun owners the same rights to carry firearms in national parks that they have in State parks, consistent with State laws. That bill also now goes to the full Senate.

“This Second Amendment legislation is critical for innocent citizens, who are obeying their State laws and adhering to their constitutional rights to possess firearms, to prevent their being arrested because the laws governing firearms in national parks are not consistent with those governing the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM),” Craig said. “The recent Supreme Court decision clarifying the right to bear arms makes it imperative for the Congress to speak to the national parks inconsistency.”

The Committee also approved S. 2354, a bill introduced by Idaho Senator Mike Crapo, that directs Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne to convey 165 acres currently managed by the Bureau of Land Management to the City of Twin Falls to enable Twin Falls to complete the Auger Falls wastewater reuse pipe. The three-year-old project is a prelude to construction of a community park and recreation center, and Craig said that \$1.7 million has been secured for its development.

Craig said the treated water from the pipe system will aid habitat restoration in the area, provide new wetlands and improved ecosystems, sustain wildlife and divert treated water harmful to aquatic life in the Snake River to another area that can use it.

Another bill passed by the Committee was S. 2875, which authorizes grants to designated Tribes and States, including Idaho, to reduce livestock loss due to gray wolf predation and to compensate landowners who suffer any losses. Craig praised the work of environmentalists and ranchers in agreeing to a livestock protection plan and said the bill passed by the Committee will provide the necessary funding to keep gray wolves in check.

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The Committee also unanimously reported out S. 3085, the Cooperative Watershed Management Act, to fund watershed management groups handling problems like water availability and water quality. Craig said grants will give priority to pilot projects and give local groups and grassroots organizations more public participation in the management process.

“Water in the West is of the utmost importance, and this bill seeks to improve both the quality and quantity of our water supply by placing management in local hands,” Craig said.

Craig, a senior member of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, was recognized for his work by Committee Chairman Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico because Thursday’s markup was the Committee’s final one for the consideration of legislation in this Congress, and is Craig’s last Committee markup before he retires in January.

Craig thanked Chairman Bingaman and Ranking Republican Pete Domenici of New Mexico as great mentors and teachers “as we’ve worked through some very valuable pieces of legislation that will be long remembered. My time on the Energy Committee was enjoyable, and I’ve learned a lot,” Craig said.